

Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)

Conservation Strategy Subgroup Meeting

February 26, 2007, 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The Resources Agency

Draft Meeting Summary

Associated documents/handouts:

1. Agenda
2. Working Draft Conceptual Conservation Strategy Alternatives (table)
3. Working Draft Conceptual Conservation Strategy Alternatives (PowerPoint)
4. Comparison to Draft Fishery Agency Goals and Objectives for the BDCP

Action Items and Key Recommendations

- Members will assign alternates that will represent members at subgroup meetings in their absence.
- The Subgroup recommends that the Planning Goals (section 3) and Preliminary Conservation Objectives (section 6) from the Planning Agreement are to be used as interim Conservation Goals (i.e., those goals related to biology conservation, not those goals related to regulatory outcomes).
- Consensus was reached among the Subgroup to record and document unresolved issues as they are identified during Subgroup meetings. Unresolved issues identified during the meeting include:
 - whether or not the Planning Goal to “provide for conservation...” means to recover species or to contribute to the recovery of species;
 - the breadth of species and other resources to be covered under the BDCP; and
 - addressing the needs of non-native commercial and sport fisheries.
- Subgroup recommends adding an agenda item to an upcoming Conservation Strategy or Steering Committee Meeting: Presentation by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on science-based criteria for determining Viable Salmon Populations (VSP).
- Fisheries agencies confirmed that the definitions of terms presented at the February 9 meeting to be used in the BDCP planning process are consistent with relevant statutory definitions.
- Consultant will expand the Draft Conceptual Conservation Strategy Alternatives (CSA's) to include:
 - preliminary set of criteria against which to compare Draft CSA's and Planning Goals/Conservation Goals,
 - stressors pertaining to each Draft CSA to provide a better understanding of why the key elements were included in each strategy,

- ecological rationale and potential conservation-related outcomes for each Draft CSA,
- two additional draft CSA options based on earlier planning efforts, specifically
 - bifurcated aqueduct conveyance
 - dual conveyance
- additional tables for the Draft CSA's further comparing the relationships among their component parts and their possible outcomes
- Consultant will work with members from Resources Agency to obtain early CALFED documents that list conservation strategies proposed during previous planning efforts. Consultant will create bibliography of readily available documents and will include key components into the Draft CSA's, where appropriate.

Meeting Purpose

To review and discuss Conservation Goals, key definitions, and Draft CSA's, and to receive members' initial responses.

Presentation and Discussion: Conservation Goals and Draft Preliminary Conceptual Conservation Strategy Alternatives (Paul Cylinder- SAIC)

Subgroup Co-chair Walt Wadlow noted that in this Subgroup we are not making decisions, we are undertaking analysis and working through key conceptual issues.

Conservation Goals

Discussion continued from previous Subgroup meeting regarding identifying the Conservation Goals. Group decision is that identifying Conservation Goals, Conservation Strategy Alternatives, Covered Species and Covered Activities will have to occur concurrently in the near-term, despite the associated uncertainty and challenges.

Discussion continued from previous Subgroup meeting as to whether BDCP's goal should be to fully "recover and conserve" species or to "contribute to recovery" for covered species and how such goals are defined. Discussion of the phrase "provide for recovery" from the Planning Agreement and the importance of the words "provide for" as a lead in to the word "recovery".

Draft CSA's

Each draft alternative is based on a broad theme. Description includes key actions/elements, conservation benefits, and conservation constraints and issues. (See Handout)

Elements of Draft CSA's can be considered independently and combined with elements from other Draft CSA's.

Expected process for identifying recommended CSA: iterative, with feedback and interaction among Conservation Goals and Covered Activities. Expectation is to reduce

the number of CSA's to about 3 by the end of April by selecting CSA's from list, combining CSA's from list, or creating new CSA's based on components of other CSA's.

Some of the draft CSA's were based on recent PPIC report (focused only on conservation elements of the PPIC alternatives) and other alternatives on other existing conservation proposals.

Draft CSA's are:

1. Operations Modifications with Existing Conveyance Configuration
2. In-Delta Habitat Restoration under Existing Operations
3. Opportunistic Exports with In-Delta Habitat Restoration
4. South Delta Aqueduct (SDA) with In-Delta Habitat Restoration
5. Isolated Facility (IF) with In-Delta Habitat Restoration
6. Suisun Marsh Habitat Restoration in combination with In-Delta Habitat Restoration
7. Upstream Habitat Restoration in combination with In-Delta Restoration

Discussion resulted in several key recommendations and comments:

- A coarse-scale screening strategy should be outlined to inform analysis of benefits and costs of each Draft CSA, based on scientific evidence and conceptual models.
- The screening strategy should be based on comparison to clearly defined conservation goals.
- Some members wanted more detailed Draft CSA's to review in the coming weeks than were provided today; many members contended that keeping them broad would be more helpful in the near-term.
- The CSA's appear to break down into two major categories: existing conveyance and new conveyance.
- CSA's could also be broken down into two major categories: fluctuating delta and stable (freshwater) delta.
- Draft CSA's should be compatible with Planning Agreement. Also a recommendation that we may want to include alternatives that are not fully compatible with the Planning Agreement to encompass a broader range.
- Because this is currently an analytical process and not a negotiation process, the Subgroup should keep all options on the table right now, even though members may not support some of them.
- Representatives of Central Valley Project water contractors state that they will not accept reduced exports as a possible component of the BDCP Conservation Strategy.
- Covered activities and covered species need to be determined prior to evaluation of any conservation strategy

Upcoming Meetings

Standing meetings on Mondays, 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. location TBA, starting 3/5/07

Goal of next meeting: Discuss CSA's at greater detail (provided by SAIC) and begin comparison of CSA's to develop a better understanding of similarities and differences and the purpose of key elements within the various CSA's.